WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for inhibiting interleukin-17 (IL-17) production by T cells comprising treating said T cells with an antagonist of interleukin-23 (IL-23).

2. The method of claim 1 wherein said T cells are activated T cells.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein said T cells are memory cells.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein said treatment is performed *in vivo*.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein said treatment is performed in a mammalian subject.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein said mammalian subject is human.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein said antagonist is an anti-IL-23 or an anti-IL-23 receptor antibody.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein said antibody is an antibody fragment.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein said antibody fragment is selected from the group consisting of Fv, Fab, Fab', and $F(ab')_2$.

10. The method of claim 7 wherein said antibody is a full-length antibody.

11. The method of claim 7 wherein said antibody is chimeric.

12. The method of claim 7 wherein said antibody is humanized.

13. The method of claim 7 wherein said antibody is human.

14. A method for the treatment of an inflammatory disease characterized by elevated expression of interleukin 17 (IL-17) in a mammalian subject, comprising administering to said subject an effective amount of an antagonist of interleukin-23 (IL-23).

15. The method of claim 14 wherein said mammalian subject is human.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein said inflammatory disease is selected from chronic inflammation, autoimmune diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis (RA), rheumatoid spondylitis, gouty arthritis and other arthritic conditions, multiple sclerosis (MS), asthma, systhemic lupus erythrematosus, adult respiratory distress syndrome, Behcet's disease, psoriasis, chronic pulmonary inflammatory disease, graft versus host reaction, Crohn's Disease, ulcerative colitis, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), Alzheimer's disease, and pyresis.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein said inflammatory disease is a chronic inflammatory disease.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein said chronic inflammatory disease is selected from the group consisting of rheumatoid arthritis (RA), graft versus host reaction, multiple sclerosis (MS), and psoriasis.

19. The method of claim 15 wherein said antagonist is an anti-IL-23 or an anti-IL-23 receptor antibody.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein said antibody is an antibody fragment.

21. The method of claim 20 wherein said antibody fragment is selected from the group consisting of Fv, Fab, Fab', and $F(ab')_2$.

22. The method of claim 19 wherein said antibody is a full-length antibody.

23. The method of claim 19 wherein said antibody is chimeric.

24. The method of claim 19 wherein said antibody is humanized.

25. The method of claim 19 wherein said antibody is human.

26. The method of claim 15 wherein said antagonist is administered in combination with an additional therapeutic agent.

27. The method of claim 26 wherein said additional therapeutic agent is an anti-inflammatory molecule.

28. The method of claim 27 wherein said anti-inflammatory molecule is selected from the group consisting of corticosteroids and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

29. A method for identifying an anti-inflammatory agent comprising the steps of:

(a) incubating a culture of T cells with IL-23, in the presence and absence of a candidate molecule;

(b) monitoring the level of IL-17 in said culture; and

(c) identifying said candidate molecule as an anti-inflammatory agent if the level of IL-17 is lower in the presence than in the absence of said candidate molecule.

30. The method of claim 29 wherein said candidate molecule is a non-peptide small organic molecule.

31. The method of claim 29 wherein said candidate molecule is a peptide.

32. The method of claim 29 wherein said candidate molecule is a polypeptide.

33. The method of claim 29 wherein said candidate molecule is an antibody.

34. The method of claim 29 wherein said T cells are activated T cells.

35. The method of claim 29 wherein said T cells are memory cells.

36. The method of claim 29 wherein the level of IL-17 is monitored by ELISA.

37. An anti-inflammatory agent identified by the method of claim 29.

38. A method for inducing IL-17 production in a mammalian subject comprising administering to said subject an IL-23 agonist.

39. The method of claim 38 wherein said mammalian subject is human.

40. The method of claim 39 wherein the human subject has been exposed to bacterial infection.

41. The method of claim 40 wherein the human subject has been exposed to infection by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

42. The method of claim 39 wherein said IL-23 agonist is an antibody.

43. The method of claim 42 wherein said antibody is an anti-IL-23 or anti-IL-23 receptor antibody.

44. The method of claim 43 wherein said antibody is an antibody fragment.

45. The method of claim 44 wherein said antibody fragment is selected from the group consisting of Fv, Fab, Fab' and $F(ab')_2$.

46. The method of claim 43 wherein said antibody is a full-length antibody.

1 47. The method of claim 43 wherein said antibody is chimeric.

1 48. The method of claim 43 wherein said antibody is humanized.

1 49. The method of claim 43 wherein said antibody is human.